MR Letters

Other Services See Dangerous Action

Colonel Neal H. Bralley, U.S. Army, Retired, Lansing, Kansas—I read Major General Robert H. Scales' article, "Urban Warfare: A Soldier's View," in the January-February 2005 Military Review, with interest. However, I have reservations about several of his assertions. These few statements detract from what began as an excellent article on an important topic facing our soldiers in Iraq, today.

I agree our infantry soldiers pay a high cost in combat losses: theirs is a most noble, necessary, and highly dangerous task. However, other soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines die in combat actions, too. Some of these actions in which our servicemembers have died haven't necessarily been deemed acts of war by our government, but they are within the definition of the law of war: they clearly meet the threshold.

On page 10 of his article, Scales mentions [that] the last major ship-to-ship action was in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, October 1944. I can list seven instances of U.S. Navy ships being attacked or suffering damage, and in five of these instances, loss of life occurred due to enemy sea action whether by air, surface, or sub-surface mine attack:

USS Liberty, AGTR-5, 8 June 1967 attacked by Israeli aircraft (much debate surrounds the intent of the Israeli armed forces, but it is widely held by many people to have been a purposeful attack). Deaths: 34 USN sailors. I would assert that these 34 sailors died from enemy air action. When someone is attacking your ship with guns, bombs, and torpedoes, from a combat aircraft, it is very much a hostile action. The captain of the USS Liberty, Commander William L. McGonagle, USN, received the Medal of Honor for his actions on 8 June 1967. Servicemembers don't receive the Medal of Honor for noncombat actions.

USS Pueblo, AGER-2, on 23 January 1968, was intercepted, attacked, and forced into the port of Wonsan, North Korea by North Korean patrol boats. The USS Pueblo was in international waters at the time of attack. Deaths: 1, and 82 sailors were imprisoned for 11 months. The United States is still technically at war with North Korea.

USS Stark, FFG-31, on 17 March 1987, was attacked by an Iraqi Mirage F-1 aircraft which launched an Exocet missile. Deaths: 37 USN sailors. Considering this attack followed an attack by two other aircraft earlier the same day on a Cypriot tanker, both attacks were hostile acts of war.

USS Samuel B. Roberts, FFG-58, on 14 April 1988, struck a mine resulting in the injury of 10 sailors.

USS Tripoli, LPH-10, struck a floating mine on 18 February 1991 in the Persian Gulf resulting in significant damage to the ship.

USS Princeton, CG-59, also struck a submerged mine resulting in multi-million dollar damage to the ship and injuries to three sailors.

USS Cole, DDG-67, was attacked on 12 October 2000 by two Al Qaeda terrorists in a small boat filled with explosives. This attack in Aden Harbor, Yemen, resulted in 17 deaths and 39 injured sailors. While this attack happened before the 9/11 attack, it was clearly a precursor to the Global War on Terrorism.

Al Qaeda had previously attempted to attack the USS Sullivans, DDG-68, on 3 January 2000, but its bomb-carrying boat sank before being able to fulfill its intended mission.

Scales' assertion about the last serious air-to-air combat action being in Operation Linebacker II during the Vietnam war may be true. The USAF, USN, and USMC aircraft have recently achieved stunningly favorable air-to-air combat successes; however, they have had less success against surface-to-air missile threats. The USAF took serious losses during a ground terrorist attack at Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on 25 June 1996. This attack resulted in the deaths of 19 USAF personnel and injuries numbered in the hundreds.

On page 12, Scales asserts, "The enemy can hide inside urban structures, but aerial dominance robs him of the ability to move freely and mass." Within urban areas, particularly urban areas having row buildings, tenements, and large apartment complexes, forces may easily move through buildings by blowing holes through walls, and they can enter sewage systems to move freely without any threat of observation by USAF or other aerial platforms. The enemy can mass within cities much more easily than he can in open terrain.

Scales' comments regarding the origin of U.S. forces' small arms, while interesting, has no real bearing on urban warfare. U.S. forces need weapons that fire reliably and accurately in all environmental and combat conditions. The Army, the service having Title 10 responsibilities for small-arms weapons acquisition, has done well in keeping effective weapons in the hands of our soldiers. There have been times when our enemies may have had a better weapon, but such events aren't limited to just rifles, pistols, or machineguns. Our field artillery cannon haven't always had the longest ranges, but our entire field artillery system of cannons, missiles, ordnance, survey control, fire direction, meteorological data, communication, and target acquisition—all combined is unrivalled. The same is true for many other systems within our Army and our Armed Forces.

On page 18, Scales makes the

statement, "Even the most advanced bombing system cannot kill any object, even a large one, on the move." There are missile systems capable of destroying large, and even not-so-large, moving targets. Hellfire missiles, for example, have been used to kill automobiles and their passengers from unmanned aerial vehicles. This may still be a challenging endeavor, but his use of the words "cannot kill any" are not wholly correct. Ground combatants must make use of every available fire support asset, and then they must select the optimal system for a particular target. One can easily get into semantics concerning the finer points between bombs, missiles, rockets, and other weapons. However, U.S. airmen are capable of killing moving targets; it may not be easy, but it can be done. In fact, field artillery weapons systems employing specific munitions, Copperhead, for instance, can hit and kill moving targets.

I was disappointed in what appeared to be a lack of a "fair and balanced" joint perspective within Scales' article.

Editor's note: Bralley used information from the following sources: <www.history.navy.mil/photos/pers-us/uspers-m/w-mcgngl.htm>; <www.usspueblo.org>; <www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/imint/pueblo-imagery-1.htm>; <http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id344.htm>; <www.dcfp.navy.mil/mc/museum/Princeton/mim91.htm>; <www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/khobar/khobar.htm>; <www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/news/news_stories/cole.html>.

Understanding versus Appreciating Cultures

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Farrier, U.S. Army—I am writing in reference to the "Military Cultural Education" article in [the] March-April 2005 Military Review by Colonel Maxie McFarland. My opinion is my own and does not represent my employer or Army Reserve unit, the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command Airborne.

McFarland makes several good points in his article. The army needs to expand its already formal regional studies program to include soldiers outside the special operations community. Officers should be encouraged to learn a foreign language, particularly one not normally heard in the United States. I would add that officer professional development at the unit level should focus as much time on other cultures as we do OERs [Officer Evaluation Reports] and counseling.

Unlike McFarland, I would not "learn more about states or cultures with whom we are most likely to form a coalition or participate in a multinational campaign" [page 65]. I think the United States is just as likely to form coalitions with the usual group (NATO countries, for example) now as it has in the past. The real challenge is learning about those countries and cultures the United States rarely comes into contact with and yet stand as the most likely to be adversarial.

That said, I pull up short when McFarland suggests "culturally literate soldiers . . . appreciate and accept diverse beliefs, appearances and lifestyles" [page 63], and that soldiers and leaders "must appreciate, understand, and respect those norms . . ." [page 63].

I do not appreciate and accept judicial punishments in some societies where flogging and amputation are part of the cultural or religious norm. Nor can I accept the legitimacy of female genital mutilation, slavery, or that life is pre-ordained by stone gods, the stars, or tea leaves. On the other hand, I do understand that other people think this way. I do understand that these views are important to some people in some cultures. Knowing and understanding, however, are not the same as appreciating and accepting.

The reason why our soldiers need to understand other cultures and languages is so that they can better serve the mission of their commands and the ultimate objective of armed conflict—winning wars. As soldiers, we are members of the armed services, not the social services.

Has the author forgotten the words from the Code of Conduct? "I am an American fighting in the forces that guard my country and our way of life . . . . I will never forget that I am an American fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles, which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America" (emphasis added). Or perhaps the author should consider the words of writer Gilbert K. Chesterton, "Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions."

Effects-Based Operations and the Exercise of National Power—A Response

Major Bryan Boyce, U.S. Army, Retired—I only recently read the January-February 2004 article on EBO [Effects-Based Operations] by Army Major David W. Pendall. I wonder what comments you received after that issue by those [who] must have felt [that] Pendall's take on EBO was not at all the EBO that JFCOM [Joint Forces Command] is advocating. The "effects" in EBO are not what blue does to red. This is not a correct understanding or use of "effects-centric" or EBO in general. "Effects" in this usage [is] not created by blue forces, as described with "effects-based targeting," rather, according to JFCOM Effects Planning and Assessment Processes, the key characteristics of effects are [that] "they must support the objective . . . , they express a single idea . . . , they must be achievable . . . , they must be measurable . . . , they must be observable . . . , they are not descriptions of blue actions or adversary motivations . . . , they describe how we want the adversary to act . . . [and] they can also express how we want to shape the battlespace to achieve our objectives." This is a common misperception that continues to be promulgated because it sounds reasonable.

According to JFCOM, "effects" are "the physical and/or behavioral state of a PMESII [political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information] system that results from a military or nonmilitary action or set of DIME [diplomatic, information, military, and economic] actions."

Correction

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